

Planning Act 2008 and The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010.

Application by Mallard Pass Solar Farm Limited (“the Applicant”) for an Order granting Development Consent for the proposed Mallard Pass Solar Farm (“the Proposed Development”)

INVITATION TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES TO COMMENT

Comments from Greatford Parish Council

12/04/2024

Cable Routing.

The issue of cable routing is fundamental to the execution of this project and to not have any agreement or firm conclusion as to a cable route is unacceptable at this stage of a DCO application, but perhaps not unsurprising given that both of the options presented are difficult to execute and have the potential to cause disruption to other major infrastructure ie: the east coast main line and / or the A6121 and that the (necessarily complex) negotiations with Network Rail did not start until August of 2022, nearly a year into the consultation / pre-application period.

The routing of cables through a culvert is potentially difficult, and will also make maintenance of the culvert much more difficult during the proposed long lifespan of this solar project. It is understandable the Network Rail are likely to be unwilling to take on any additional maintenance burden for a culvert that has a high voltage cable running through it. Recent events in nearby Tallington, 6.3Km to the south of Essendine have clearly underlined the importance (and difficulty) of maintaining assets under the railway.

In Tallington a collapsed sewer underneath the railway has led to sewage and surface water flooding in the village and deployment of various pumps throughout the village to move flood water out of the village as it was unable to leave under gravity via the sewer under the railway. The situation is as yet unresolved and the local MP (Gareth Davis) has become involved to try and bring the relevant parties (Anglian Water and Network Rail) together to resolve the situation. As a side note Greatford suffered significant flooding on 03/01/2024 with around a third of the homes in our village suffering internal flooding. We are acutely aware of the problems in trying to engage national infrastructure stakeholders to conduct adequate maintenance of their assets, and are currently living with the consequences assets being allowed to degrade through lack of maintenance.

The alternate cable route using the A612 and the bridge over the east coast mainline has also yet to be agreed with National Rail and also presents significant problems.

Highways & traffic.

As has been previously highlighted by local residents and Greatford Parish Council traffic, and specifically HGV traffic through the village is an increasing problem. Additional traffic from this and other proposed developments will cumulatively make the problem much worse with HGV’s taking cross country routes to avoid the longer prescribed routes along A roads. Adding to this already problematic issue for Greatford while the works to enable the routing of cables via the A6121, through the village of Essendine, and over the Network Rail railway bridge, will cause more significant traffic delays over a long period of time, and immense disruption to the residents and businesses of Essendine and it is our assessment that both Greatford & Carlby residents will be impacted by this proposed cable routing option as they are on the obvious detour routes to avoid long delays caused by the necessary roadworks in Essendine and along the A6121.

The fact that neither Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) nor Rutland County Council (RCC), have come to any agreement with the developer regarding traffic issues highlights just how significant an issue traffic flows around this development are both during the building phase, and the maintenance and decommissioning phases. The developer seems to grouping the councils together in its approach to this issue but it is clear that each council has its individual concerns that are yet to be addressed by the developer.

Community Benefit Fund.

We were somewhat surprised to hear about a community benefit fund being offered by the developer at this very late stage of the process, when absolutely no community benefit has been offered to our community, or any other local community that we are aware of, at any stage of the community consultation or planning process.

This is a side issue and not part of the planning process, and in truth seems like a very late, and very cynical ploy by the developer to try and deflect the high level of opposition that this proposed development has encountered in our village mainly owing to the increased flood risk arising from the runoff from this proposed development when soil is saturated and the runoff from more than half a million solar panels makes it way to Greatford and overwhelms the already inadequate flood defences .

Summary.

It seems clear that crossing the railway line with the necessary high voltage cables is a problem that the developer has repeatedly failed to address, a DCO cannot, and should not be granted if agreements that are key to development are not in place. Greatford Parish Council remain opposed to this development for this reason and also those reasons detailed in previous representations.

Philip Britton

Chair Greatford Parish Council